

Champaign, Ill. ATCT (CMI) Archie League Award Winner

Audio Transcript

Controllers: David Murphy and Yasemin Parker

Pilot: Willard Nickisch (N8048Q)

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Time: 5.45

WILLARD NICKISCH, PILOT: I've got an autopilot that won't release and it wants to pull me down into a dive.

NICKISCH: I don't know if I can find the approach. It is taking all of my muscles to just hold back on this thing. ... OK, let's go for you ... You're going to have to radar vector me and give me some frequencies. ... OK, uh, one-eight-zero and I'm above the deck so I'd like to stay up as long as I can, but ... uh ... uh ... uh ... OK ... yeah, 1-8-0.

MURPHY: November 8048Quebec, this is Champaign Approach. How do you hear me, sir?

NICKISCH: I hear you sir.

MURPHY: November 48Quebec, I'm going to vector you to an approach to Runway 32 Right. Are you capable of flying an NDB or a GPS approach, sir?

NICKISCH: If I didn't have to fight the autopilot I would, but no I can't at this time. I want to try the ILS.

MURPHY: 48Quebec. What I'm going to do is I'm going to provide a radar surveillance approach for you to Runway 32 Right. I'll provide all the vectors and I'll give you recommended altitudes on final. All you'll have to do is fly the airplane. Do you have any difficulty other than the autopilot?

NICKISCH: No, but it's a handful.

MURPHY: Yes, sir, I'm aware of that. I just want to make sure what else to maybe be prepared for. Just stay at your present altitude or whatever altitude you need to stay a VMC until we get you set up on final. I won't bring you down into the clouds until we have you lined up with the runway. I'll take you out to about 10 miles, make a 12-mile final.

NICKISCH: OK, make it as short as you can.

MURPHY: OK, I can make it shorter but I'm going to have to have you start descending. You're right now only five miles from the airport.

MURPHY: November 48 Quebec start a descent. When you're ready, maintain two thousand four hundred. Two thousand four hundred. When I see you start descending, I'm going to turn you toward the airport.

MURPHY: November 48 Quebec, are you able to start your descent, sir?

NICKISCH: I thought I was going down. It's taking everything I can to hold back on the yoke. They tell me if I release the pressure, the thing might let go. But boy it puts me in a straight dive down, straight down.

MURPHY: We're in no hurry, I have no other traffic so you tell me whatever it is you need to do.

NICKISCH: The big question is how long can I hold her. I'm going to try releasing it and going down but let's see if I can pull her out.

NICKISCH: Yeah, she wouldn't let go. OK ... uh ... what do you want me to do?

MURPHY: Well, November 48 Quebec, I want to vector you toward the airport but if you don't think you can control the descent, stand by I'm trying to get some other assistance.

NICKISCH: I'm controlling the descent. I tried to let go of the yoke so the autopilot would let go but it wouldn't, so ... uh ... continue with the approach, please.

MURPHY: November 48 Quebec, roger. Continue in the gradual right turn. You are nine miles from the runway and this will be a vector to Runway 32 Right. The wind is 3-2-0 at 1-0.

MURPHY: November 48 Quebec, are you the only person on board?

NICKISCH: Roger.

MURPHY: November 48 Quebec you can start descent now to the minimum descent altitude. That is 1-1-0-0 descend at your discretion. You are five and one-half miles from the runway and I show you on course.

MURPHY: November 48 Quebec, report the airport in sight when you have it. You are now five miles from the runway.

MURPHY: November 48 Quebec, you are cleared to land on Runway 32 Right. Let me know when you see the airport.

NICKISCH: I have the airport.

MURPHY: November 8048 Quebec you are number one. Cleared to land Runway 32 Right. Remain on my frequency for now.

NICKISCH: I'm going to try dropping the gear. You got the trucks ready?

MURPHY TO LOCAL CONTROL IN TOWER: Local, verify the trucks have been rolled. He's going to try and lower the gear and he doesn't know what that's going to do.

MURPHY: Local East, what do you got?

LOCAL EAST: Local, he's on the ground. Safe.

MURPHY: November 48 Quebec, contact Champaign Tower on 1-2-0 point four. Nice job, sir.

NICKISCH: Where may I park?

MURPHY: November 48 Quebec, you can just stop wherever you need to sir.